



UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF POVERTY AND CHANGE

Follow-up Action by the Rethinking Impact Workshop Participants and Organizers

The **Rethinking Impact Workshop (RIW): Understanding the complexity of poverty and change** was held in Cali, Colombia, March 26–28, 2008. The workshop discussed (1) how agricultural and natural-resources research can be more effective in contributing to solutions for poverty alleviation and improving gender, social inclusion and equity; (2) how its impact can be assessed; and (3) how such research and impact assessment can be brought into the mainstream. An open-space session was held on the third and final day of the workshop to enable participants to organize themselves into groups for action-planning purposes. Nine action-planning groups were: Principles and standards; Networking and community of practice; Methodologies guidelines (including ‘soft’); Institutionalization; *Ex-ante* impact assessment, priority-setting and planning; Organizing framework; Capacity-building; Communications; and, Histories and political economy of agricultural and natural-resources science and technology. This *Brief* reports some of the follow-up actions that the participants and organizers (ILAC Initiative, PRGA Program and ILRI’s Innovation Works) committed themselves to undertaking.

Communications

The PRGA Program has established a listserv for continued informal interaction among participants and other interested persons, with a possible emphasis on peer sharing, mentoring, and review of ideas and material. A summary of the Workshop is being prepared, along with a fuller proceedings. Meanwhile, ILAC Initiative is taking the lead in taking the key messages of the Workshop to the Alliance Deputy Executive meeting in June 2008. The Workshop organizers have reviewed all the workshop papers and a proposal for a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal is being developed.

Enhancing the contributions of research to poverty alleviation

CIFOR,[†] with support from the CGIAR[‡] Information Communication Technologies-Knowledge Management program (ICT-KM) is leading an effort to develop a compendium of *ex-ante* impact-assessment methodologies currently in use in the CGIAR. This document is currently under review and will be published within the year. A discussion forum will also be established to promote dialogue about how best to move forward with a more systematic research priority-setting process that stimulates dialogue and challenges assumptions.

The ILAC Initiative is investigating indicators for organizational learning capacity assessment and means by which CGIAR Centers and their partners. Indicators are likely to include: tolerance of ambiguity, uncertainty and errors; degree to which new ideas and suggestions are dealt with sympathetically; scope

The **Rethinking Impact Workshop (RIW): Understanding the complexity of poverty and change** held in Cali, Colombia, March 26–28, 2008, was organized and sponsored by the CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis for Technology Development and Institutional Innovation (PRGA Program), the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) Innovation Works Programme and the Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative.

of relationships with external environment (clients, other research institutes, political systems, etc.); and, level of influence that employees have in the decision-making processes.

ILRI's Innovation Works Initiative and other workshop participants committed to further developing a set of principles for linking knowledge with action that was discussed at the workshop, and to link the principles with tools, methods, approaches and strategies. A training course for research managers aimed at CGIAR scientists and their non-CGIAR partners will be developed in collaboration with Harvard University's Sustainability Science Program.

The PRGA Program conducted a gender audit at CIAT[†] in 2008. The results showed modest integration of gender analysis in research and in achieving gender and diversity goals. The report elaborates detailed steps toward mainstreaming gender in research and the workplace, beginning with the dissemination of the audit's results in June 2008. The CIAT Board of Trustees gave its full backing to the report and committed itself to action. The PRGA Program is committed to expanding the gender audit to other Centers. The audit results will be highlighted at a high-profile event planned for spring 2009 by the CGIAR Gender and Diversity Program and IFPRI.[‡] The PRGA Program is also developing a Gender Research Prize to encourage and support gender-sensitive research in Centers and research teams. The Prize has been endorsed by the CGIAR Alliance Board, and a proposal for financing it is being developed.

Assessing the impact of research for poverty alleviation

The Research into Use Programme, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, ILAC Initiative and others made a commitment to develop an information portal for impact-assessment methodology. This would compile existing impact-assessment methods and examples to make them more accessible and understandable for use by researchers, research managers and practitioners, and would help identify gaps where new methods are needed. This group is also seeking resource support for a major impact-assessment research project that would develop or adapt methodology and then apply the methodology to participatory research for development.

The PRGA Program has taken a lead in developing a summary of frameworks, methods and impact types from the papers presented at the Workshop.

A number of other actions recommended to the management of the CGIAR are described in *Rethinking Impact Workshop Brief* No. 2. Action taken by participants and organizers would be enhanced by action taken by senior CGIAR leaders, thereby increasing the chances for institutionalizing change to ensure a more effective contribution by the CGIAR to poverty alleviation. *Rethinking Impact Workshop Brief* No. 1 summarizes six key issues emerging from the Workshop, upon which the actions and recommendations are based.

[†] CIFOR – Center for International Forestry Research; CIAT – International Center for Tropical Agriculture; IFPRI – International Food Policy Research Institute.

[‡] The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) is a strategic alliance of members, partners and international agricultural centers that mobilizes science to benefit the poor (see www.cgiar.org).

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